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ABSTRACT

This study examined whether or not there were any significant difference among educational leaders in their views on whether regional accreditation should be used to enhance achievement interests of minorities in American colleges and universities, and what variables might account for any reported differences. The results of the study, which used a mailed survey and achieved a 46 percent response rate (n=160), included the following: (1) race was found to have a major effect on the views of educators in five of the 13 areas of the questionnaire; (2) people of color are more likely to support using regional accreditation to achieve cultural diversity in the curriculum, accommodate minority interests in research and publications, hire and maintain fair representation of minority persons in the faculty and in key administration positions, and accommodate higher education interests of minorities generally; (3) except on issues of fair representation of minorities in the faculty and administration, over 50 percent of whites support using regional accreditation to enhance minority access and success in higher education; and (4) 64.9 percent and 89.7 percent of whites and non-whites, respectively, support using regional accreditation to achieve curricular diversity, 50.8 percent of whites and 86.2 percent of non-whites support using accreditation to accommodate interests of minority persons in research and publications. (Contains 123 references.) (MAB)

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Regional Accreditation For Access And Success Of Minorities In American Colleges And Universities

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Introduction

The problems of high dropout and low graduation rates of minority students in American colleges and universities have persisted over the years. Authoritative sources have shown that representation of the interests of minorities in the faculty, administration and curriculum are important in any sincere effort to address the problems, (Rendom, Hope and Associates, 1996 Bergguist, 1995; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995; Limpert, 1996; Walshok, 1995). Efforts by regional accrediting bodies to have member colleges and universities apply these measures to improve the access and success of minority students on their campuses have been seriously challenged by some government and educational leaders. For example, former Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander insisted that "an accrediting agency has no business going around establishing some proper mix of gender and race" (Wiley III, 1991, p. 3). The actual position of the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA) was not clear. Theodore Marchese (1991) questions whether regional accreditation has served useful and avowed purposes. On the whole, the fundamental purposes, appropriate approaches and future direction of regional accreditation are not clear. This paper reports the results of a survey of chief academic officers about their views on whether regional accreditation should be used to enhance the achievement of the interests of minorities in American higher education.

The issues addressed in this paper are particularly important at this time when: (1) regional accreditation is being criticized for lack of involvement in major educational reforms (Marchese, 1991); (2) American postsecondary accreditation is being reorganized following the institutionalization of the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA) to replace COPA (Work, 1993; Manger, 1993a; American Council on Education (ACE), 1994a, 1994b, 1994c); (3) the participation, persistence and graduation rates of minorities, especially the African Americans, have continued to decline despite recent demographic projections of the future manpower shortage (ACE, 1994x; Hudson Institute, 1987, 1988a, 1988b; Hodgkinson, 1985); (4) the Department of Education is demanding more accountability from regional accreditors because of the programs that turn out unemployable graduates, thereby contributing to student loan defaults (Jaschik, 1993); (5) authorities are still debating the viability of curricular diversity in the nation's institutions (Leatherman, 1994); (6) the Congress and the White House are being pressured to review the affirmative action law; and (7) the rates of crime,

incarceration, recidivism, unemployment, poverty and other socioeconomic woes have continued to worsen among minority populations (Bureau of the Census, 1994).

Diversity: Meaning and Framework

Beginning in the 1960s, diversity was used to describe students from historically underrepresented ethnic groups but was later applied to the faculty, administration and board of trustees, focusing on numerical ethnic profiles (Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC), 1994). The application of the concept of diversity to undergraduate curriculum and other aspects of higher education, however, is a relatively recent development. Three major elements of diversity include representation, accommodation and tolerance.

Diversity and affirmative action differ in certain basic respects. Affirmative action emphasizes primarily the numerical representation of women and people of color in the work force while diversity views this as necessary but not sufficient to change the environment to enhance the chances of success for those who gain access through affirmative action. Most importantly, diversity emphasizes inclusion and active participation of all groups in a particular social environment (University of California at Davis, 1991). While affirmative action does not necessarily address curricular issues, diversity does.

Viewed as academia's instrument of cultural engineering (Gumport, 1988), the multicultural general education curriculum, in its power to generate and transmit basic knowledge, shared values, interests and ideas, will serve as a social cement to promote the much needed cohesion, mutual understanding and collegiality among different groups and individuals in a common geographical environment. The objective of curricular diversity is not to replace the study of traditional courses, texts and materials that emphasize Western, European and Caucasian perspectives; rather, the new curricular is expected to be all inclusive (WASC, 1994) and to be sensitive to various other racial groups. For example, such a dehumanizing word as "slaves" should be changed to "enslaved persons" so that students understand the true meaning of slavery (Conciatore, 1991).

Among regional accreditors, considerations for multicultural diversity are variously based on such values as quality, equity, effectiveness and integrity (WASC, 1994; Weiner, 1990; Middle States Association of College and Schools (MSACS), 1994; New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), 1992; North Central Association of Colleges ad Schools (NCASC), 1994). In general, therefore, the concept of diversity in American higher education refers to a movement for accommodation and representation of the interests of ethnic minorities and women in curriculum, faculty, administration, testing and evaluations, library resources, research, publications, and in various positions, opportunities, considerations and processes that are associated with college and university education in the United States.

The Controversy

Diversity initiatives and proposals in higher education have generated serious resistance and controversy among various groups and individuals within and outside college and university campuses (Leatherman, 1994). Proponents of diversity standards in regional accreditation argue that lack of proper accommodation and representation of minority interests in various aspects of higher education creates quality problems (Weiner, 1990; WASC, 1994; H. L. Simmons

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in Wiley III, 1990a, 1990b).

Some have argued that worsening rates of attrition, participation, graduation and of the overall success of minorities in Predominantly White institutions (PWIs) have continued because the environments of campuses (Justiz, 1990, Love, 1993), the curriculums (Brown, 1988; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983; Schweickart, 1988; Sudarkasa, 1989), the faculty (Astin, 1982; Blackwell, 1988; Brooks, 1987; Harvey, 1986; Rendon, 1989), the assessment approaches (National Evaluation Systems, 1988; Educational Testing Service, 1988a, 1988b; Gacia, 1986), the culture (Moody, 1990; Irvin, 1991), the administrative ranks (*Black Issues in Higher Education*, April 26, 1990), the criteria for acceptable research and publications for tenure consideration (Wiley III, 1990e) and other traditional characteristics of PWIs have not been adapted to the circumstances and growing needs of minority students (Rainsford, 1990; Barkiwski, 1990; Callan & Finney 1990; Sheheen, 1990; Kameen & Justiz, 1990; Justiz & Kameen, 1990; Turner, 1994). Also, research has consistently shown that a student remains in college when he or she feels connected, involved and served (Tinto, 1987) and that student retention and success are largely a function of the quality of students' compatibility with the institution (Brewer, 1990; Crosson, 1988).

The arguments for minority representation in the faculty and administration are not necessarily new, but a more recent argument for diversity in higher education centers on the curriculum. Proponents of curricular diversity argue that multicultural core curricula give all students opportunity and common knowledge for mutual understanding, respect and tolerance among one another (Schmitz, 1992; Bossman, 1991; L. Fisher in Morris, 1990; O'Brien, 1989; Moore, 1992 Boyer and Kaplan, 1977). Moreover, it has been noted that the self-esteem, motivation and academic performance of students of color increase as a result of course materials that are related to their cultural roots (K. F. Ashanti in Dervarics, 1990; Schiele, 1991). Others believe curricular diversity gives students of color the opportunity to learn the accurate and complete history of their ancestors (Harvey, 1993; Hawkins, 1993; A. E. Jenkins III and L. Fisher in Morris, 1990; Wiley, 1989).

Carole Corcoran argues that "We give students inaccurate information if we only represent the perspective of 'one culture in the curriculum' because they get a false or biased view of what constitutes knowledge and how it came about" (Wiley III, 1989). In defending the position of the MSACS on diversity, Howard Simmons wondered how curriculum could have integrity "if you leave out references of large contributions from different groups" (Wiley III, 1990a, p. 8). Creige (1994) argues that multicultural curricula would improve international and intercultural understanding and would consequently minimize international conflicts by making it more difficult for political leaders to misinform their citizens about other nations in their efforts to garner political support for wars. For example, Creige noted that Americans' poor knowledge of Iraqi culture helped Bush to win the support of the American people for the Gulf War.

The opponents of diversity contend that colleges need to return to a traditional Eurocentric core (Bennett, 1984; W. Bennett and A. Gloom in O'Brien, 1989; W. Bennett in Creige, 1994) and that curricular diversity represents academia's trivialization of liberal education and continuing attack on the cannons of traditional collegiate instruction (J. Agresto in O'Brien,1989). John Faso and others (in Conciatore, 1991) argue that Western perspectives would dominate because the U. S. culture is rooted in Europe, and they criticize multicultural curricula for attempting to "make everyone feel they are equal part" in the development of U. S. culture. Jean

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Allen of the Heritage Foundation observes that there is a hidden agenda among certain liberals: (1) they want to see others persecuted because they believe they were persecuted in the past; (2) they do not want to teach that black children are as good as others; (3) they want black children to believe that they are better than other children; and (4) they want to degrade the level of Western Civilization (Wiley III, 1990c).

Perhaps the peak of the controversy at the national level came with involvement of the U. S. Department of Education (Wiley III, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1991a, 1991b, 1992). The action of MSACS, in April of 1989, to delay re-accreditation of Baruch College of the City University of New York because of non-compliance with the MSACS's diversity standard was unacceptable to the Secretary of Education, Lamar Alexander (Wiley III, 1990c, 1991a, 1991b; Jaschik, 1991). On the other hand, Howard Simmons of MSACS argues that there are no better agencies to deal with issues than regional accreditors (Wiley III, 1990a). MSACS wanted Baruch to justify its efforts to correct a 50% minority dropout rate in an institution with a poor record on minority hiring (Wiley III, 1990b). Secretary Alexander and some members of the National Advisory Committee on Accreditation and Institutional Eligibility insist that diversity issues have no place in regional accreditation (Wiley III, 1990c, 1991a, 1991b, 1992; Jaschik, 1991; ACE, 1992a) . In contrast, President Robert H. Atwell of ACE, Secretary Earnest Benjamin of the American Association of University Professors, Congressman Ted Weiss of New York and various other leaders (ACE, 1991a, 1991b, 1991c, 1991d; Atwell, 1990; Wiley III, 1991a, 1991b, 1992) insist that diversity initiatives in regional accreditation are appropriate.

Accommodation of Nontraditional Students

Rapid technological and societal changes since the 1960s have caused many adults to return to colleges for new skills, new careers, new degrees, and for various other reasons (Apps, 1981; Stewart and Spille, 1988; Cross, 1987). As a timely response to societal needs in higher education, the *Educational Amendments of 1972* provided administrative and financial support to assist institutions and students in promoting the cause of nontraditional education (Mayville, 1980). Typical nontraditional students include working adults, housewives, first generation college students, young and old adults motivated to study independently, inmates, physical handicaps, adults without basic education, or others who cannot easily come to the campus or do not wish to devote full-time to classroom endeavors (Steward & Spille, 1988). As traditional college systems were not designed with the conditions of these students in mind, institutions and regional accreditors made necessary adaptations to accommodate their conditions and interests (Andrews, 1983). Adaptations by institutions include academic credits for life experiences, off-campus class locations, negotiated new curriculums, take-home and open-book examinations, summer, weekend and evening classes, independent study contracts, credit by examination, outreach programs, correspondence study, reduced or nonresidency requirements for earning a degree, and other practices that were not common in postsecondary institutions (Stewart & Spille, 1988; Apps, 1981). Traditional institutions and programs have adopted most of these nontraditional practices and still maintain their regional accreditation status. Although minority students have taken advantage of the nontraditional models, more direct adaptations, inclusions and accommodations are still necessary given their unique circumstances and interests (Love, 1993).

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Regional Accreditation and Diversity

The motivation for diversity is mixed among regional accreditors. The most aggressive agencies for diversity are MSACS and WASC, followed by the NEASC and NCACS (MSACS, 1988, 1993; Wiley III, 1990a, 1990b; WASC, 1988, 1994; Weiner, 1990; NEASC, 1992; Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), 1994; Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (NASC), 1994; North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCACS), 1994). The Diversity Principles of NCACS were adopted on August 9, 1991, but official communication of the principles to the public occurred with the release of its current handbook in late 1994. MSACS, WASCS, and NCACS encourage their member institutions to apply diversity principles to general education curriculum and staffing. The NEASC emphasizes diversity mainly in the faculty and student services; however, WASC and MSACS diversity initiatives are advisory at best, since no actions will be taken against institutions that fail to accommodate diversity (WASC, 1994; ACE, 1992c; Wiley III, 1992). MSACS's weakened stance on diversity is perhaps attributable to its conditional recognition by the Department of Education following MSACS's controversy with Baruch College (Wiley III, 1992). It is fair to say that the inability of COPA to defend MSACS's position against Baruch College and the conditional recognition of MSACS by Secretary Alexander have retarded the trend toward diversity standards in regional accreditation. These issues and the controversy among government leaders, educators and activators about the appropriate conclusion to diversity and regional accreditation have made this research necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to find (1) if there is any significant difference among educational leaders in their views on whether regional accreditation should be used to enhance the achievement interests of minorities in American colleges and universities, and (2) the variables which account for significant differences that may exist. Race as a single independent variable was studied against 13 dependent variables (See Table 1).

Conceptual Framework

Minority and majority racial and ethnic groupings, accredited colleges and universities, regional accrediting associations and the Commission on Recognition of Postsecondary Accreditation (CORPA, the newly created national commission which has replaced COPA) are all interdependent partner systems and subsystems in American society—the composite social system. The nature and directions of their interactions, interrelationships and interdependence largely depend on: (1) their respective roles or functions in the social system (structural functionalism); (2) the nature and level of individual or group consciousness of its own distinct demographic identity and own relationship to positions of authority (conflict theory); and (3) the individual or group interpretation of symbolic environments, roles and expectations (symbolic interactionism). Minority students are considered as a subgroup of nontraditional students.

Methodology

Table 1: Chi-Square and Related Cross Tabulation Values for Tests of Significance between Race and Each of the Dependent Variables

Dependent Variables	chisq	P-Value	Fe	Cells	% of Cells with Fe <5
Diversity in Curriculum	6.86	*0.03	3.26	6	16.7
In Research and Publications	12.56	*0.00	6.20	6	0.0
Fair Represent. on Faculty	52.63	*0.00	4.35	6	16.7
Fair Rep. on Admin. Position	58.76	*0.00	4.35	6	0.0
Everything into Consideration	32.60	*0.00	10.01	4	0.0
In Library Holdings	2.61	0.27	0.73	6	50.0
In Testing Instruments, etc.	6.59	0.04	2.37	6	33.3
Enrollment, Attrition, Grad.	0.68	0.71	0.54	6	66.7
Use Group Records in Planning	2.20	0.33	0.73	6	50.0
Publ. Criteria of 2 yr to 4 yr.	1.68	0.39	0.54	6	66.7
Provide Support Services	1.22	0.54	0.73	6	50.0
Be Able to Defend Efforts	2.60	0.27	1.66	6	33.3
Record Enrollments Graduation	0.88	0.64	2.18	6	33.3

Note. To reject H_0: For tables with four cells, F_e must be > 5 in all cells; for tables with more than four cells, F_e must be greater or equal to five in at least 75% of cells and F_e must be greater than one in remaining cells (Agresti & Finlay, 1986, p. 209).

*$P < .05$ (In the first five rows, all requirements to reject H_0 are satisfied.)

The author developed the survey instrument from an extensive review of available literature. The instrument was structured to elicit information from higher education leaders on whether regional accreditation should be used to promote cultural diversity in the curriculum, faculty and administration (Table 2). The questionnaire items, presented in closed and open-ended formats, were based on recent theories and arguments for and against diversity criteria in regional accreditation. Further, the instrument was reviewed by chief executives of two regional

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Responses among Respondents to Crucial Questionnaire Items on Various Issues

*Variable Code:		1	2	3	4	5
Whites:	Disagree	22.1	25.4	69.5	69.5	26.6
	Undecided	13.0	23.8	16.0	16.8	**
	Agree	64.9	50.8	14.5	13.7	73.4
Non-Whites:	Disagree	6.9	3.4	10.3	10.3	14.8
	Undecided	3.4	10.3	10.3	6.9	**
	Agree	89.7	86.7	79.3	82.8	85.2
Total Respondents:	Whites	131	130	131	131	124
	Non-Whites	29	29	29	29	27
Cramers V		0.21	0.28	0.57	0.61	0.46

Key to Variable Coding:

Variable Code	Variable Name
1	Diversity in Curriculum
2	Diversity in Research & Publications
3	Fair Representation of Minority Persons on the Faculty
4	Fair Representation of Minority Persons in Key Administrative Positions
5	Taking Everything into Consideration

**This response option (undecided) was not provided in the questionnaire; respondents were required to answer simply "Yes" (agree) or "No" (Disagree).

accrediting associations which pioneered the diversity thinking in regional accreditation.

The stratified random sampling method was used in selecting the respondents who included the chief academic officers of four-year colleges and universities in the Southern accrediting region. Of the 447 four-year institutions affiliated with SACS, only 71 were Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), (SACS, 1991; National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, 1990). Because of their comparatively small number, a hundred percent of PBIs in the region was selected. A total of 275 PWIs was selected by a simple random method. The

instrument was mailed directly to chief academic officers of the 346 institutions. They were selected for three major reasons. First, by virtue of their positions in the institutions, chief academic officers have substantial influence in major decisions affecting students of their institutions. Second, they influence major issues, processes and outcomes of their institutional self-study. Finally, they influence the accrediting policies of their regional associations through their attendance, voting or appointment of representatives in the annual meetings of their regional accrediting commissions.

Results of the Study

Of the 346 copies of the questionnaire that were mailed, 160 were returned. The 46 percent response rate represented 129 PWIs and 31 PBIs; 81 public institutions and 79 private; 131 Whites, two Hispanics, 25 African Americans, one Asian American and one other minority person. These were later collapsed to 131 Whites and 29 non-Whites; 33 females and 123 males; six chief executives of institutions, 111 provosts or chief academic officers, three faculty senate officers and 35 directors and deputy directors of institutional research. By implication, some of the returned questionnaires were completed by some other influential administrators or close associates of the chief academic officers who were not in the sample; nevertheless, their responses were useful since the major criterion of ability to influence major decisions of the institution appeared to be satisfied. Besides, they were appointed by the chief academic officers to complete the survey on their behalf. Race was found to have a major effect on the views of educators in five out of 13 areas (Table 1).

Table 1 represents the results of Chi-square tests. The thirteen-row entries in the table represent thirteen different tests. In the first row, for example, the minimum expected frequency (fe) of 3.26 is greater than one, the number of cells with minimum expected frequency of less than five is 16.7 percent, and the attained significance level of .03 is less than the predetermined alpha of .05. Therefore, it is safe to say that the racial profile of educators significantly affects their views on whether regional accreditation should be used to achieve cultural diversity in the curriculum. Similar conclusions can be drawn from tests represented by rows two, three, four and five. Table 2 presents percentage distribution as further elaboration on the results of the first five variables of the study. The null hypotheses (Ho) tested with the information in the last eight rows cannot be rejected since there is no statistical evidence to do so.

Table 2 presents percentage distribution of responses of educators to questionnaire items related to the first five variables in Table 1. The figures in Table 2 show that persons of color are more likely to support using regional accreditation to: (1) achieve cultural diversity in the curriculum (column one); (2) accommodate minority interests in research and publications (column two); (3) hire and maintain fair representation of minority persons in the faculty (column three) and in key administration positions (column four); and (4) accommodate higher educational interests of minorities generally (column 5). Except on the issues of fair representation of minorities in the faculty and administration, over 50% of Whites are in support of using regional accreditation to enhance minority access and success in American higher education.

Column one shows that 64.9% and 89.7% of Whites and non-Whites respectively support using regional accreditation to achieve curricula diversity in American colleges and universities (column one). Furthermore, 50.8% of Whites and 86.2% of non-Whites support using regional

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accreditation to accommodate interests of minority persons in research and publications (column two). The figures in columns three and four are similar: in both cases, 69.5% of Whites agree that regional accreditation should be used to achieve fair representation of minority persons in the faculty and in key administrative positions, but among minorities, 79.3% and 82.8% respectively agree. The questionnaire item for column five has only two response options (yes or no).

The Cramer's V values in Table 2 are useful in assessing the strength of association between race and each of the dependent variables. With a Cramer's V value of 0.61 (column 4), race has the strongest effect on the views of educators about whether regional accreditation should be used to achieve fair representation of minority persons in key administrative position. The variable with weakest association among the five is diversity in curriculum with a Cramer's V value of 0.21 (column 1).

Other Findings

In addition to findings from the closed-ended questions as reported above, a few responses to open-ended questions are very important. A number of educators who disagreed with diversity in regional accreditation explained that they were not necessarily against diversity standards. They variously advised that regional accrediting agencies should not dictate diversity criteria, that institutions should set their own diversity goals independently, that affirmative action laws should be considered adequate on matters of equity, that it would increase racial tension on the campus, and that diversity standards were too complex to establish and far too difficult for external evaluators to make judgments about. On the issue of representation of minority interests in the faculty and administration, about 24 respondents insisted that qualifications should be the only fair criterion for staffing decisions relating to faculty and administrative positions; and five people condemned any hiring approach that suggests quotas. Although most of the open-ended responses were provided by those who disagreed and those who were undecided, a few comments by diversity supporters are important.

The supporters noted that the issue of diversity includes both quality and equity; the inherent benefits accrue to all students regardless of ethnicity; the curriculum should reflect the interests of all the higher education constituencies including the women, people of color and Whites; mission statements and core curricula should always be adapted to changes in the society and student body; institutions should have separate departments for general education; institutions should publish the racial compositions of their student body in their catalog; and the concept of "minority" in diversity issues should be expanded to include women.

Discussion and Conclusion

An underlying hypothesis of this study was that the views of educators would be affected mainly by the cost-benefit considerations to educators themselves as individuals and as members of one demographic group or another. Interestingly, these premises were partially supported by the results. People of color saw diversity as an opportunity for representative participation in the affairs of higher education and to have their histories, values, philosophies and contributions to American civilizations recognized in the academic community just as the Cau-

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casians' had been traditionally studied by college and pre-college students. There is a mixed message, however. It is paradoxical that over fifty percent of Whites are in support of curricular diversity but only 14.5% are in favor of a fair representation of minority persons in the faculty. Obviously, questions of integrity and legitimacy may arise in a situation where a multicultural general education curriculum is institutionalized but people of color are not included in the faculty. Perfect examples are students' protests (in Iowa State University, Portland State University, Wayne State University, Weber State University, and University of California at Berkeley) against White professors for teaching Black history and that of American Indians and for being heads of ethnic studies programs (Magner, 1993b).

Furthermore, in 1994, the *News and Observer* of Raleigh, North Carolina published an article about a Black student at Duke University who complained about the incompetence of a White professor who taught a course about African Americans. He noted that he enrolled to improve his knowledge as a student, but he ended up teaching the course since the professor, many a time, sought his validation of what he was teaching. In other words, minority students may not have confidence in multicultural programs that are dominated by White faculty members and administrators; the programs may lack integrity and legitimacy. This observation is further supported by the fact that part of the reason for recent agitation for multicultural curriculum, ethnic studies programs, Afrocentricism and the like is to correct significant distortions and omissions in the history and accomplishments of members of minority groups (Friedman, Kolmer, Flint, and Rothenber, 1996; Conciatore, 1991).

In fact, the odds against diversity in American higher education go beyond the preferences of faculty members and educational administrators. The recent upsurge of antics against affirmative action programs among Republican presidential candidates has affected the philosophy and policy direction of the University of California System in ways that run counter to possible diversity programs in the system campuses. Although most of the extremists are dropping out of the race, even Bob Dole, a leading Republican candidate who is not seen as an extremist, has proposed that the Equal Opportunity Act of 1995, which would terminate affirmative action policies, be adopted by the Congress (Browne-Miller, 1996). Repealing affirmative action law would make it more difficult to include people of color on the faculty and administration. However, having affirmative action law in place does not guarantee anything. Reliable sources indicated that before the 1994 elections Texas colleges and universities were seriously advertising for minority representations in the faculty; but when the polls were showing possible defeat of the Democratic incumbent by the Republican opponent (Mr. Bush), certain institutions delayed the processing of applications received from minority applicants. As soon as Mr. Bush was pronounced the winner of the gubernatorial election, the institutions claimed that the hiring decisions were suspended for budget reasons. In other words, without strong government support and commitment, affirmative action and diversity will be a mirage.

As for the future of diversity in regional accreditation, it will take some time to get the traditionalists to accept fully or apply the principles of adult and nontraditional education to any effort to increase the access and success of minorities in the colleges and universities. In the United States, public policy issues are decided mainly on the basis of a majority vote. The present issue is not an exception. The possibility of favorable votes for diversity in any of the regional associations will depend on the administrative structure and racial configuration of the

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institutional representatives who will vote on the issues. Usually, the representatives of member institutions of each of the six regional associations in the country meet annually to vote on proposed changes in such membership matters as accreditation criteria, membership fees and special fees. In the case of SACS, the College Delegate Assembly (CDA), which votes on substantive policy issues, includes more than 700 four-and two-year institutions (SACS, 1989a, 1991). Less than eleven percent of the total membership of CDA is PBIs. With over eighty percent of PWIs as voting members, the chances for majority vote in favor of diversity are very slim. Additionally, acceptance or rejection of diversity is difficult to determine from the result of this study since a good majority of Whites are against numerical representation of minority persons in the faculty and administration. They may possibly vote for curricular diversity, since the study indicates 64.9 percentage support by Whites, but the issues of integrity and legitimacy will persist.

Furthermore, immediately below the CDA, in the organization hierarchy of SACS, are other important actors who can influence policy direction of issues. They include the Commission on Colleges (COC), the Executive Council of the Commission (ECC), the full-time Commission staff, and three standing committees of the Commission (SACS, 1989a). A proposal should go through the organizational channel before coming to the CDA for approval voting. Race is never a criterion in selecting the members of any of these groups. Members of CDA, COC, ECC and the three standing committees are selected on the basis of such criteria as institutional membership, institutional classification based on levels of academic degrees being granted, states in the region and laity profile (SACS, 1989a). In other words, who participates in the election of members of these committees and who is eventually elected, as well as the characteristics of the voting representatives of member institutions, are critical factors.

However, as publicly recognized custodians of academic quality, institutional integrity and educational effectiveness among American colleges and universities, regional accreditors should be more up front in their positions on diversity; otherwise, a leadership vacuum may persist. Handbooks of SACS and NA are silent on diversity. The fundamental purposes of regional accreditation, objectivity and public interest should be the organizing principles or points of reference (Chambers, 1983). The power, leadership and integrity of CORPA are seriously challenged.

Recommendations

The findings from this research have resulted in some preliminary recommendations for accrediting bodies and their member institutions. To regional accrediting bodies and their member institutions, it is appropriate to recommend that: (1) minorities and women be involved in deciding appropriate approaches and measures of educational quality; (2) personal and group interests be suppressed for national and societal interests in all decisions pertaining to proper approaches and measures for institutional effectiveness and academic standardization within the framework of regional accreditation; (3) percentage measures of institutional effectiveness be based not only on the success level of the total student population but also on that of every distinct demographic group on the campus; (4) all considerations given to adult and nontraditional students be extended to minority students; (5) CORPA play a more responsive and visible role as the national leader in affairs of educational quality and institutional effectiveness; and

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(6) appropriate records of student enrollment and graduation by race, ethnicity and other significant demographic characteristics be a part of regular institutional and self-study documentation so as to make management by exception approaches possible.

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